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Kennedys Lambaste Former JFK Secretary

Harsh criticism of Evelyn Lincoln

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Washington

President John F. Kennedy's children launched a scathing attack yesterday on Kennedy's longtime personal secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, saying the treasured mementos she collected belonged with them or in the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston — and not with the Maryland collector who plans to auction them.

After weeks of largely futile private negotiations, John F. Kennedy Jr. and Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg broke their silence by releasing a public statement through the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation assailing Lincoln, who died in 1995, and Robert L. White, a Maryland collector who plans to auction hundreds of treasured Kennedy mementos that Lincoln gave him or left him in her will.

Evelyn Lincoln

In an unprecedented condemnation of one of President Kennedy's closest aides, the Kennedy children said the items, including an alligator briefcase and gold Cartier watch their father had with him when he was assassinated, belong with them or in the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston.

"It is now clear that Mrs. Lincoln took advantage of her position as our father's secretary, and later as the custodian of objects intended for the library, by taking home with her countless documents and objects that belonged to our father and to the United States government," the Kennedy children said. "In so doing, Mrs. Lincoln breached both the public trust and that of our family."

The two-day sale by Guernsey's auction house in New York is scheduled to start tomorrow. But the Kennedys and library officials last night were considering taking last-minute legal action to try to block the sale of many items, if not the entire auction.

Last week, the National Archives, a federal agency that serves as the nation's record-keeper, sent a letter to Guernsey's asserting that a number of documents and items in the sale might rightfully belong to the National Archives or to the Kennedy Library Foundation, which is part of the archives.

On another front, federal prosecutors charged a Connecticut man yesterday in a scheme to forge hundreds of documents said to be in the handwriting of John F. Kennedy and sell them for more than $7 million to unsuspecting investors.

The man, Lawrence Cusack III, a former paralegal, said that he found the papers in the files of his late father, a prominent New York lawyer, and had them authenticated by handwriting experts. Cusack, 47, was arrested early yesterday morning at his home in Fairfield, Conn., and released on $2.5 million bond later in the day by U.S. magistrate judge in Manhattan.